

REP. RODNEY TOM

48TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

HEALTH CARE SOLUTIONS DESERVE OUR ATTENTION THIS SESSION

The cost and quality of our health care often begins with us. The cost to treat smoking-related disease in the U.S. is \$150 billion a year. What's more, the human toll is 440,000 people each year die from smoking. It's one thing to inflict illness upon yourself, but the studies on the dangers second-hand smoke are irrefutable. Smoking-related illnesses consume 16% of the state's Medicaid dollar. In tight budgetary times, the public can't be expected to continue subsidizing smoking.

Childhood obesity is now epidemic in the United States and 14% of children are obese. My concern is that overweight adolescents have a 70%

chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. It clearly makes more sense to prevent rather than pay to treat resulting health problems.

Health care costs are skyrocketing and while the vast majority of people have health care coverage, the cost of that coverage is creating a crisis. To help solve it, I support:

- Teaching children the benefits of physical exercise early in life by mandating physical education in middle school.
- Outlawing smoking in public places.
- Instituting small-group insurance reform.
- Passing medical malpractice insurance reforms.

Three out of four Washingtonians work for small business. Many of them can't get health care coverage because it's too expensive for their employers. The Legislature can be part of the solution to this crisis by removing government mandates and giving employers greater flexibility to offer working families affordable, basic health coverage.

In many communities we are hearing about situations where escalating medical malpractice premiums are prompting health care providers to close their doors or limit the services they offer. We must take a comprehensive look at liability reforms to help manage the high cost of malpractice insurance and keep good doctors in our communities.



REPRESENTATIVE
**RODNEY
TOM**
R-BELLEVUE

CONTACT INFORMATION

Olympia Office:

P.O. Box 40600
418 John L. O'Brien Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7848

E-mail: tom_ro@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free message hotline:
1-800-562-6000

Commissions:

Washington State Arts
Commission

Committees:

- Education
Assistant Ranking Republican
- Technology, Telecommunications & Energy
- State Government

REPRESENTATIVE
RODNEY TOM
418 John L. O'Brien Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

REPRESENTATIVE

RODNEY TOM

48TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

PUTTING PROGRESS FIRST IN THE 2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's good to be back in Olympia, ready to tackle the challenges before us in the 2004 legislative session. I enjoyed meeting with so many of you during the last few months, and receiving feedback critical to my work here on your behalf.

Please continue to share your thoughts, concerns and questions. With local priorities in mind, I strive to work in cooperation with fellow lawmakers to put Washington back on track to economic prosperity; create excellence in education for all children; and provide lasting solutions for our health care system focusing on preventive care.

I welcome your questions and concerns regarding legislative issues. Please don't hesitate to call on me. My job is to serve you, as well as represent you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rodney Tom

Rodney Tom
State Representative



EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO INDIVIDUAL PROSPERITY AND OUR STATE’S FUTURE

The state’s paramount constitutional duty is education; hence a large portion of our state budget goes to support it. Our education system represents the hopes and dreams of our future. We must strengthen our schools and provide students with a world-class education to help them successfully compete in the high tech, global economy.

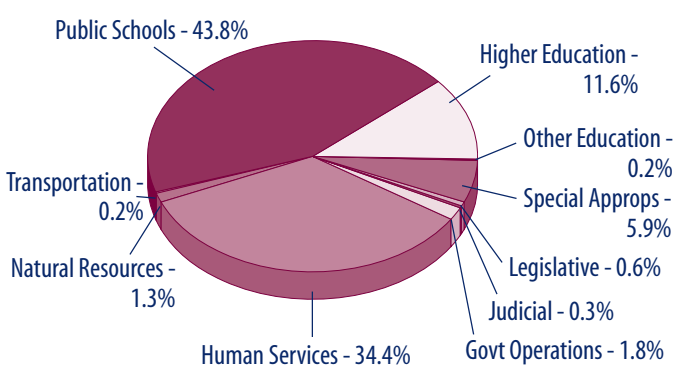
Focusing on early childhood education can have a significant impact on K-12 education. Making sure children are ready to learn by the time they enter kindergarten is paramount to their future success. Too many children are left behind before they begin. Targeting those children most at risk is one of the best investments we can make.

Every major study on educational excellence finds that the number one success factor is having well-trained, well-supported teachers in every classroom. We must ensure that all students have an effective teacher through better training, higher standards and flexibility to reward high demand specialties and excellence.

I will continue my support of legislation to allow voters to decide if school operating levies should be approved by a simple majority, and allow districts with voter-approved levies to collect all of the money authorized under the levy, even if it exceeds a state formula for local funding.

We must also continue to improve the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) by allowing retakes and making provisions for special education students. This will make sure all students achieve their full potential.

About 58% of our 2003-05 Washington operating budget goes to pay for education in Washington. K-12 receives nearly 44% of your state budget dollar and higher education, nearly 12%.



INTERESTING EDUCATION FACTS:

- Last year, the high school drop out rate in Washington was 32%.
- For every \$1 spent in early childhood education, the government saves \$7 in future expenditures.
- Up to 50% of high school students entering college require remedial education.
- We currently under fund college enrollment by more than 18,500 students.
- We need to make room for an additional 15,000 college students by 2008.

KEEPING WASHINGTON ON TRACK FOR IMPROVED ECONOMIC TIMES

In 2004, I'll work on creating a business climate that grows the economy and makes Washington more competitive for attracting and keeping family-wage jobs in our communities. With signs that the U.S. economy is rebounding, it's more important than ever to position our state to participate in that economic expansion.

Last session, we effectively passed a no new tax operating budget designed to help the neediest in our communities, and make Washington a better place to do business. Boeing's decision to build its 7E7 here is an excellent sign we're on the right track.

It's more important than ever to follow sound fiscal principles as we create a 2004 supplemental budget. The state must end 2005 with an operating budget that is sustainable and doesn't require new taxes or a reduction in core services. We must also strengthen the state's spending limit and create a reliable, "rainy day fund" for lean years.

INTERESTING ECONOMY FACTS:

- In 2003, lawmakers closed a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without raising taxes.
- The current budget provides reserves of \$488 million, compared to more than \$1 billion in 2001.
- Labor & Industries instituted a 9.8% increase in workers' comp rates – the second such employer paid increase in two years.



FOLLOWING THROUGH ON REFORMS TO PROVIDE JOBS AND PROSPERITY FOR FAMILIES

Tax policies that help encourage investment in Washington will go a long way toward supporting growth and creating employment opportunities for more people.

As well, I've prime-sponsored legislation crucial to keeping home ownership affordable, while ensuring consumers are protected. I think we all agree that a new condo shouldn't leak, and that reputable builders shouldn't face frivolous lawsuits – House Bill 3131 would help solve our condominium liability crisis by ensuring both. Without my legislation, the supply of new housing will dwindle, causing a sharp spike in new home prices. This will create strong pressure to push out urban growth boundary lines, causing more suburban sprawl and deterioration of our delicate natural environment.

While our economy remains in a period of slow growth, we must create a competitive climate that will position our state for a strong and quick recovery by:

- Renewing and extending tax incentives for high-tech Research and Development;
- Lifting the regulatory burden; and
- Instituting liability reforms.

KEEP IN TOUCH... I'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Your input helps me do a better job of representing you and your family.

Because we are entering an election year, the law allows us to send you only two House-sponsored mailings between now and next November; this one at the beginning of the legislative session and another after it ends to brief you on the progress we made.

We can, however, continue our communication and correspond with constituents who contact us directly with questions or requests for information regarding specific issues.

One of the best ways to reach me is by going to my member Web site <http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/tom> and clicking on the FEEDBACK button.

Rep. Tom offers education ideas to members of the Family Learning Center.